

Focus on Delivering Seamless Service to Job Seekers, Employers, and the Community

Branding, Communications and Outreach

- **Background** – The Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which took full effect on July 1, 2000, created a locally integrated "One Stop" delivery system of multiple employment services, job training, and educational programs, designed to provide universal access to services for job seekers and to meet local business demands in communities across the country. Maryland's statewide workforce investment system is made up of 12 local workforce investment areas, including 34 One-Stop Centers. The system includes local boards whose partners represent local governments, state agencies, educational institutions, businesses; community-based organizations, and organized labor.

The WIA goal of establishing a state-wide coordinated and unified workforce investment system has not been fully realized in Maryland. Local boards have developed their unique local system brands and have separate communication and outreach strategies. These local identification and outreach methods do not facilitate the customer's (participants, business, economic development) recognition of the local system as being part of a statewide workforce investment system. Additionally, using a single communication to promote the use or benefits of this statewide system across the state is impossible, as it includes disparate pieces.

The current identity of Maryland's Workforce System consists of various acronyms for agencies and programs that hold little or no universal meaning to the customers served. A comprehensive rebranding initiative to address the architecture of the entire system including One Stop Career Centers, online services, and other public interfaces is required to achieve a positive return on Maryland's investment in the system. The rebranding action item must include establishing the system's foundational elements or values such as:

- quality of customer service
- user-friendly tools
- consistent case management, and
- standard menu of services.

In developing the architecture of the system, flexibility for local adaptation must also be considered. While a unifying and easily identifiable name, logo and message are important communication and marketing tools, these must be developed in support of the overall goals of our local areas and should enhance the experience for our customers. This change will require repositioning of all elements of the system and will have impacts at both the state and local levels.

The purpose of the contract to be awarded is to assess the effectiveness of existing local and state workforce investment branding systems and the synergy from having a statewide branding system; develop a single brand, to be used statewide, without eliminating the local systems' recognition; and to provide cost-effective communications and outreach guidance and support for the network of Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) and One Stop Career Centers that comprise the Maryland Workforce Investment System.

- **Update** – The State is currently in the procurement process identifying a vendor to provide the services outlined in the contract. A further update will be provided once DLLR completes the procurement process.